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Comparative Religion Notes.

IN Professor Max Müller's fourth volume of Gifford Lectures just issued, entitled *Theosophy or Psychological Religion*, is a discussion of Zoroastrianism or the religion of ancient Persia. While adding nothing of importance to our knowledge of it, Professor Müller presents some views respecting the relation of Judaism to the Persian faith which are very striking and important. He holds that there are coincidences which are so close that the only explanation of them is borrowing. This borrowing has been on both sides. Zoroastrianism is distinguished from the closely related Hindu religious systems by its monotheism. This monotheistic bent so different from the "monotheism" of the Vedas, is due to the influence of the Israelites who had been deported to Media by the Assyrian kings and there came into contact with the adherents of Zoroastrianism. It was Israel that taught Persia the faith of the one God. On the other hand Judaism took from the Persian religion the beliefs in the resurrection of the body and the immortality of the soul, and the doctrine of future rewards and punishments. They are not in the older portions of the Old Testament. They appeared among the Jews after the Jewish commonwealth had come under Persian domination. In the Persian religion they are a part of the earliest faith. Even the biblical "I am that I am" as a divine name is discovered by Professor Müller in the Avesta, and from critical grounds, he argues that here the Old Testament must have borrowed from Persia. These conclusions seem to be accepted on not altogether established grounds, and the student must suspend his judgment until further researches are made into the ancient Persian sacred literature, one of the most difficult of all the subjects with which students are grappling to-day. It is gratifying to know that such competent and brilliant scholars have given themselves to this field as Mills, Darmesteter, and Geldner, and not the least among them the American scholar, Jackson of Columbia College, New York.

It is not to be wondered at that there have been many expressions of distrust and disfavor respecting the Parliament of Religions, to be held in connection with the Columbian Exposition. The wonder is, some may think, that it has been received with so much applause. Strict old-school theologians, timid religionists, and many orthodox partisans were bound to oppose it. Conscientious scruples against bringing the unique religion of Christ into friendly relations with the "false" religions have compelled the withdrawal of sympathy and assistance in some quarters. Even ridicule

and abuse have been poured upon the idea from some religious newspapers. Yet it has not lacked defenders, not a few of whom have come from the ranks of missionaries. The Rev. T. J. Scott of Calcutta, expresses himself vigorously on the subject after the following fashion: "Now all the ridicule that is heaped on this enterprise, seems to assume that there is nothing in the great ethnic religions, and that systems of religious thought that have held millions of the race from antiquity, are worthy only of a passing sneer. Think how comparatively small a part of the race during the ages have had the Bible. Think of the millions that have come and gone in the ancient historic nations, and in the nations that have come down to our time, as India, China, and Japan. The population that has had the Bible is but a drop in the ocean compared with these. Have these had but very small measure of God's grace and love while his wrath only has ever lowered over them, abandoned only to darkness and despair? Have they had no dispensation of mercy and hope? To claim this is what has provoked the statement that if such is the Bible and the God of the Bible, the less of them propagated abroad the better. As one puts it, 'Why try to prove the love of God to nations whom on your own showing, God has left from the creation until now in darkness.' Has God had no care over these nations? Has he never spoken to them? Is there a providence over all the world, and if so, is there nothing to learn from these nations? What of the Gentile saints mentioned in the Bible, as Melchizedek and Job, and Jethro, father-in-law to Moses, and Cornelius, and others not so mentioned? Too many religious teachers manifest a narrow and ungenerous spirit in this matter. I have not so learned Christ. God's attitude toward the Gentile nations will yet be interpreted in a better light. What may seem to the *Indian Witness* and to some correspondents prudence and wisdom, is hardly the spirit of Jesus, nor of Paul his great apostle to the Gentiles, nor will it be the spirit of the twentieth century. No one need be ashamed to meet the representatives of the ethnic faiths at Chicago, and seek 'to deepen the spirit of human brotherhood among the religious men of diverse faiths.' Nor will any one be "ashamed of the gospel of Christ.'"

FROM an address recently delivered by the United States ex-minister to Russia, Hon. Charles Emory Smith, on the Greek Church, the following passages give a clear idea of the usages and present status of that great branch of Christendom:

"The Greek Church is that part of the great Christian body which recognizes only the authority of the first seven Ecumenical Councils. Originally it was united with the Roman Church. Differences began to spring up as early as the fifth century, but the schism was not fully completed till the eleventh century. The Greek Church is practically a federation of churches without any center of authority. There is no Pope in the Greek Church, but there are Patriarchs of Constantinople, Antioch, Alexandria, and Jerusalem, the chief

prelate being known as the Metropolitan. The Russian Greek Church embraces nearly seventy-five million adherents, more than the entire population of the United States. The Emperor of Russia is the head of the church, but he has no more to do with its doctrines than the King of Italy or the Emperor of Austria has with the doctrines of the Roman Church. The emperor is described as the defender of the faith. As far as the appointive power goes, he is the complete head of the hierarchy, and the Holy Synod is made up of his appointees. The Greek Church agrees with the Roman Church in various dogmas. They have the same veneration for the Virgin and mass. They recognize the sacraments and pay attention to fasting. But there are marked distinctions. The Greek Church denies the primacy and spiritual supremacy of the Popes. It recognizes no human infallibility except on the part of the Ecumenical Council. It maintains that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father, not from the Son; rejects the doctrine of purgatory, though it recognizes the intercession of the saints. The church has what is termed a white clergy and a black clergy. The latter are monks. They are celibates. But the white clergy are required to marry. The white clergy preponderate. It is from the black clergy that the high prelates are chosen. The white clergy are not allowed to exercise any choice as to their wives. The selection is made by a bishop, who chooses the widow or daughter of another priest. All the priest's sons must become priests, and the only possible method of escape is by entering the army. The Greek Church does not have images, but rather representations of the Saviour, the Madonna, and the saints upon surfaces. These representations are called ikons, and those in the edifices are beautiful and very valuable, being studded often with precious stones. In every house and every shop is an ikon, and when one enters the door he must take off his hat in respect for the ikon. As to the character of the worship, one never hears a sermon. I never heard but one Russian hierarch deliver a discourse, and that was on an anniversary. The services consist of mass and music. Sometimes the music is very monotonous, but then it will become most entertaining and ravishing, the grandest melodies and the sweetest voices that I ever heard. Women do not take part. All the singing is by men and boys. The boys who have the sweetest voices are selected for the priesthood, and their voices are trained during their whole life. There is no instrumental music."